

rises with a live, wriggling snake in his mouth. He starts around the circle, the snake twisting and writhing about his head. The second priest of his trio throws one arm around the neck of the snake bearer and plays the snake whip about the head of the reptile, to keep him from biting. The third of the three follows to seize the snake when it drops.

Around and around these trios march, to the incessant din of rattle and chant. One man carries in his mouth an enormous bull snake, nine feet long. As they pass you may see a big rattlesnake strike his bearer, fastening his fangs in his cheek and hanging on in a rattlesnake's bull-dog way. The effect of it all is nauseating horrible, yet, in its way, horribly fascinating. After being borne around three times the snakes are dropped and caught by the third man. Two rattlers and a whip-snake, on the ground are making rapidly for you in a way that is not comfortably, but they are deftly stopped and caught.

All the seventy-five snakes must be marched around in this way, so the bearers take fresh mouthfuls, some putting two and three in their mouths at one time and march as before. The little boys assist in holding the snakes, and show their bravery by handling the poisonous rattlers without fear. At the end of this marching the "Antelope" priests who have been holding the snakes with which the snake priests have danced, return them to the snake priests, who line up near the edge of the mesa. Here an old priest, using sacred corn meal, has outlined a circle with six cardinal points. At a given signal all the snakes are thrown onto this meal drawing, and the next instant are snatched up in handfuls, and the snake priests are seen running down the sides of the high mesa carrying the snakes with outstretched arms.

Thus are the snakes returned to the fields below so that they may carry the prayers of the living to the dead in the under-world — intercede with the gods of nature for a bounteous supply of rain, that their crops may not fail and that they may not die from starvation and thirst.